

Lower Sorbian language

Lower Sorbian (*dolnoserbšćina*) is a West Slavic minority language spoken in eastern Germany in the historical province of Lower Lusatia, today part of Brandenburg.

Standard Lower Sorbian is one of the two literary Sorbian languages, the other being the more widely spoken standard Upper Sorbian. The Lower Sorbian literary standard was developed in the 18th century, based on a southern form of the Cottbus dialect.^[3] The standard variety of Lower Sorbian has received structural influence from Upper Sorbian.^[3]

Lower Sorbian is spoken in and around the city of Cottbus in Brandenburg. Signs in this region are typically bilingual, and Cottbus has a Gymnasium where one language of instruction is Lower Sorbian. It is a heavily endangered language.^[4] Most native speakers today belong to the older generations.

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Phonology

The phonology of Lower Sorbian has been greatly influenced by contact with German, especially in Cottbus and larger towns. For example, German-influenced pronunciation tends to have a voiced uvular fricative [ʁ] instead of the alveolar trill [r]. In villages and rural areas, German influence is less marked, and the pronunciation is more "typically Slavic".

Lower Sorbian	
	<i>dolnoserbšćina, dolnoserbski</i>
Pronunciation	[dolnoserbšćina, dolnoserbski]
Native to	Germany
Region	Brandenburg
Ethnicity	Sorbs
Native speakers	6,900 (2007) ^[1]
Language family	Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balto-Slavic ▪ Slavic ▪ West Slavic ▪ Sorbian ▪ Lower Sorbian
Writing system	Latin (Sorbian alphabet)
Language codes	
ISO 639-2	dsb (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=119)
ISO 639-3	dsb
Glottolog	lowe1385 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/lowe1385) ^[2]
Linguasphere	53-AAA-ba < 53-AAA-b...-d (varieties: 53-AAA-baa to 53-AAA-bah)

Consonants



Bilingual road sign in Cottbus, Germany

Consonant phonemes^{[5][6]}

		Labial		Dental/ Alveolar		Postalveolar		Dorsal	Glottal
		hard	soft	hard	soft	hard	soft		
Nasal		m	m ^j	n	n ^j				
Plosive	voiceless	p	p ^j	t				k	
	voiced	b	b ^j	d				g	
Affricate				ts		tʃ	tʂ		
Fricative	voiceless	f		s		ʃ	ʂ	x	h
	voiced	v		z		ʒ	ʐ		
Trill				r	r ^j				
Approximant		w	w ^j	l				j	

- /m, m^j, p, p^j, b, b^j, w, w^j/ are bilabial, whereas /f, v/ are labiodental.^[5]
- /n, n^j, l, r, r^j/ are alveolar [n, n^j, l, r, r^j], whereas /t, d, t̪s, s, z/ are dental [t, d, t̪s, s, z].^[5]
- /tʃ, ʃ, ʒ/ have been variously transcribed with ⟨tʃ, ʃ, ʒ⟩^{[7][8]} and ⟨tʂ, ʂ, ʐ⟩.^[9] Their actual phonetic realization is flat postalveolar [t̪ʃ+, ʃ+, ʐ+]^[10] in all of the Lower Sorbian-speaking area. This is unlike in standard Upper Sorbian, where these are palato-alveolar [tʃ, ʃ, ʐ].^{[11][12]}
- /h/ is voiceless [h], unlike Upper Sorbian, where it is voiced [h].^{[13][14]}

Final devoicing and assimilation

Lower Sorbian has both final devoicing and regressive voicing assimilation:^[15]

- *dub* /dub/ "oak" is pronounced [dup]
- *susedka* /'susedka/ "(female) neighbor" is pronounced ['susetka]
- *licba* /'licba/ "number" is pronounced ['l̪idzba]

The hard postalveolar fricative /ʃ/ is assimilated to [ʂ] before /tʂ/:^[16]

- Šćit /ʃčit/ "protection" is pronounced [ɛt̪it̪]

Vowels

The vowel inventory of Lower Sorbian is exactly the same as that of Upper Sorbian.^[17] It is also very similar to the vowel inventory of Slovene.

Vowel phonemes^[17]

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Close-mid	e		o
Open-mid	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

- /i/ is retracted to [ɪ] after hard consonants.
- /e, o/ are diphthongized to [iɛ, ɔɔ] in slow speech.^[17]
- The /e–ɛ/ and /o–ɔ/ distinctions are weakened or lost in unstressed syllables.^[18]
- /a/ is phonetically central [ä].^[17]

Stress

Stress in Lower Sorbian normally falls on the first syllable of the word:^[19]

- Łužyca ['wuʒiʃsa] "Lusatia"
- pšijašel ['pšijasɛl] "friend"
- Chóšebuz ['xɔʃɛbus] "Cottbus"

In loanwords, stress may fall on any of the last three syllables:^[19]

- internat [intɛr 'nat] "boarding school"
- kontrola [kɔn 'trɔla] "control"
- september [sɛp 'tɛmbɛr] "September"
- policija [pɔ 'lijičija] "police"
- organizacija [ɔrganji 'začija] "organization"

Most one-syllable prepositions attract the stress to themselves when they precede a noun or pronoun of one or two syllables:^[19]

- na dwórje ['na dwiřjɛ] "on the courtyard"
- pši mnjo ['pši mnjɔ] "near me"
- do města ['dɔ mjɛsta] "into the city" (note that the [iɔ] of město ['mjiɔstɔ] becomes [ɛ] when unstressed)

However, nouns of three or more syllables retain their stress:

- *pśed wucabnikom* [pśeđ 'učabnɔjikɔm] "in front of the teacher"
- *na drogowanju* [na 'drɔgowanju] "on a journey"

Orthography

The Sorbian alphabet is based on the Latin script but uses diacritics such as the acute accent and caron.

Sample

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Lower Sorbian:

Wšykne luže su lichotne rožone a jadnake po dostojońscí a pšawach. Woni maju rozym a wědobnosć a maju ze sobu w duchu bratšojsztwa wobchadaś. (All people are born free and equal in their dignity and rights. They are given reason and conscience and they shall create their relationships to one another according to the spirit of brotherhood.)^[20]

See also

- Upper Sorbian language

References

1. Lower Sorbian (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/dsb/>) at Ethnologue (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Lower Sorbian" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/lowe1385>). Glottolog 3.0. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Björn Rothstein, Rolf Thieroff (2010). Mood in the Languages of Europe (<https://books.google.com/books?id=o3L8oKcbZtoC>). John Benjamins Publishing. pp. 376–377. ISBN 9789027205872.
4. Moseley, Christopher, ed. (2010). Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php>) (3rd ed.). Paris: UNESCO Publishing. ISBN 978-92-3-104096-2.
5. Stone (2002), p. 605.
6. Zygis (2003), pp. 180–181.
7. Hannusch (1988).
8. Stone (2002).
9. Zygis (2003).
10. This transcription follows Laver (1994:251–252). Other scholars may transcribe these sounds differently.
11. Zygis (2003), pp. 180–181, 190–191.
12. Šewc-Schuster (1984), pp. 40–41.
13. Stone (2002), pp. 600, 605.
14. Šewc-Schuster (1984), pp. 43, 46.
15. Hannusch (1998), p. 12.
16. Hannusch (1998), p. 13.
17. Stone (2002), p. 600.

18. [Stone \(2002\)](#), pp. 606–607.
19. [Hannusch \(1998\)](#), p. 14.
20. [Omniglot](http://www.omniglot.com/writing/sorbian.htm) (<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/sorbian.htm>)

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External links

- [Online course for Lower and Upper Sorbian](#) (<https://sprachkurs.sorbschlernen.de/#/welcome>) (English, Sorbian, German)
- [Dolnoserbski radio program](#) (http://www.rbb-online.de/radio/sorbisches_programm/sorbisches_programm.html) (RealAudio) (in German and Lower Sorbian)
- [Lower Sorbian Vocabulary List](#) (<http://wold.clld.org/vocabulary/10>) (from the World Loanword Database)

Dictionaries

Czech-Lower Sorbian and Lower Sorbian-Czech

- [Slovník DolnoLužická Srbština <=> Čeština](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20161004132431/http://slovnik.vancl.eu/indexDLS2.php>) (in Czech and Lower Sorbian)

German-Lower Sorbian

- [Deutsch-Niedersorbisches Wörterbuch](#) (<http://www.dolnoserbski.de/dnw/>) at dolnoserbski.de (in German and Lower Sorbian)
- [Korpus GENIE – GEsprochenes NIEdersorbisch/Wendisch](#) (<http://genie.coli.uni-saarland.de/>) (in German and Lower Sorbian)

Lower Sorbian-German

- [Dolnoserbsko-nimske słowniki](#) (<http://dolnoserbski.de/ndw/>) at dolnoserbski.de] (in German and Lower Sorbian)

- [Lexikalische Übungen und Terminologie](https://sorb.philol.uni-leipzig.de/de/studium/materialien/lexikalische-uebungen-und-terminologie/) (<https://sorb.philol.uni-leipzig.de/de/studium/materialien/lexikalische-uebungen-und-terminologie/>) at the Universität Leipzig (in German and Lower Sorbian)

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